

The concept of Growing Degree-Days (GDD), as outlined by the Cornell Cooperative Extension ([www.cce.cornell.edu/suffolk/grownet/ipm/gdd.html](http://www.cce.cornell.edu/suffolk/grownet/ipm/gdd.html)), for insect pest management is of interest in this respect as it relates larval development to temperature. For every °F that the mean daily temperature between 1 March and 30 September is above 50, one GDD is accrued. For example, if the average of the minimum and maximum temperature on one day during this period is 55°F, 5 GDDs are added to the accrued total. The aim is to enable horticulturalists to estimate the most appropriate timing for pest control procedures (pesticide application). With *T. ephemeraeformis*, they recommend taking precautions between 600 and 900 GDDs. Although not of immediate relevance to the timing of male eclosion, this demonstrates that predictions can be made regarding larval development rates, based on the influence that temperature has on larval development of this insect.— IAN SIMS, 2 The Delph, Lower Earley, Reading, Berkshire. RG6 3AN.

***Biston strataria* Hufn. (Lep.: Geometridae): Melanic forms in north-west Kent**

On 19 March 2005, a melanic *Biston strataria* was found at my garden m.v. light at Dartford. The pale areas present in normal specimens are obscured by dark scaling; it was identified as ab. *robiniaria* Frings. Chalmers-Hunt (1976. *The Butterflies and Moths of Kent, Suppl. Ent. Rec.* . 88: 156) mentions several specimens from East Kent (VC 15), but none from West Kent (VC 16). The aberration is depicted in Ford (1955. *Moths*. Plate 8.4). It would appear to be comparatively rare in Britain; it is quite distinct from the more extreme melanic ab. *melanaria* Koch, uniformly black and resembling ab. *carbonaria* Jordan of *B. betularia* L., which has become common in Holland, but here remains known from but two or three specimens.

Thus there has been considerable resistance to the development of industrial melanism in Britain in this species. However, in north-west Kent until very recently many specimens have displayed a tendency towards melanistic development by the white areas becoming sullied by dark scaling to a varying degree. Thus, ab. *intermedia* Lempke might be regarded as a melanistic form representing a half-way stage to ab. *robiniaria* with its somewhat darkened white areas. It has been a not uncommon variety here, but no longer so. I have two specimens dated Eynsford 14.iii.1961 and Dartford 2.iv.1995. Chalmers-Hunt (*op. cit.*) does not mention this form as occurring in Kent. It is important to note that such specimens are not heterozygotes for ab. *robiniaria* which in fact are very similar to the homozygotes (note appended to a long series of bred ab, *robiniaria* in the National Collection).— B. K. WEST, 36 Briar Road, Dartford, Kent. DAS 2HN.